

# Social Questions

## BULLETIN

of the Methodist Federation for Social Service (unofficial), an organization which rejects the method of the struggle for profit as the economic base for society; which seeks to replace it with social-economic planning in order to develop a society without class distinctions and privileges.

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## The New Anti-Semitism

There has always been a certain amount of anti-Semitism in the United States, particularly in the large cities of the eastern seaboard. Generally it has been a polite social anti-Semitism that concentrated on excluding Jews from certain summer resorts, limiting their number in colleges and professional schools, keeping them out of certain neighborhoods, etc. It was based vaguely on the belief that Jews were guilty of sharp business practices and that they were too ambitious—too “pushy.” This mild but irritating intolerance had its lunatic fringe of professional Jew-baiters and super-patriotic organizations, but they were small in number and insignificant in influence.

Within the last two years, however, the United States has witnessed the emergence of a new anti-Semitism, ugly and militant, which has gone into the streets crying for the blood of the Jews. Jews by the score have been attacked in eastern cities, Jewish shops have been covered with obscene anti-Semitic stickers, Jewish women have been spat upon while walking along the street, and entire Jewish neighborhoods have been terrorized by invading bands of hoodlums.

### FATHER COUGHLIN

The center and inspiration of this ominous new anti-Semitism is the Rev. Charles E. Coughlin. Ever since the Spanish Civil War he has been calling for a “Christian Front” against “communism,” and in the Spring of 1938 he openly called upon his followers to organize storm-troop “platoons.” (*Social Justice*, May 23, 1938.) He supplemented this call for storm-troopers with repeated denunciations of the Jews, whom he charged with creating and financing the Russian revolution, and his magazine, *Social Justice*, reprinted the oft-disproved “Protocols of Zion,” which purport to show that the Jews created democracy, capitalism, the gold standard, and freedom of the press in order that they might dominate the world. He defended the publication of this hoary forgery by saying that while the Protocols might not be authentic, they nevertheless were “factual.”

The “Christian Front” for which Father Coughlin had been calling as an antidote to what he called the “Popular Front” was actually organized in a church building of the Paulist Fathers’ order in New York in August, 1938.

It was organized both as a membership organization and as a coordinating agency for certain other anti-Semitic groups, among them the Social Justice Distributors’ Clubs, the Crusaders for Americanism, the American Nationalists, the American Patriots, the Citizens’ Protective League, the German-American Business League, the German-American Bund, and the Christian Mobilizers. It addressed its appeal to all “Christians,” but actually limited its membership to men.

This organization is today the spearhead of the new anti-Semitic drive in the United States. It and its “coordinated” organizations, particularly the “Christian Mobilizers,” hold hundreds of meetings a week in New York and other cities, meetings so violent and inflammatory that they are frequently followed by physical attacks upon any unlucky Jews who may be in the neighborhood. Along with this program of street activity goes a boycott against Jewish merchants, pushed vigorously by the “Mobilizers,” who systematically canvass entire communities enlisting people in their “Buy Christian” campaign.

### CHRISTIAN FRONT CONSTITUENCY

At present the membership of the Christian Front is almost entirely Irish and Catholic, although there are some Germans and Italians and a thin sprinkling of non-church Protestants. The organization, probably because of its pro-Franco, anti-communist orientation, seems to enjoy some favor in official Catholic circles. The *Tablet*, official organ of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn, is sold along with *Social Justice* at most Christian Front meetings, and its columns have reeked with anti-Semitism. The International Catholic Truth Society has been openly friendly to the Front, and some priests, notably those belonging to the Paulist Fathers, have been publicly associated with it. On the other hand liberal Catholics have organized an unofficial “Catholic Committee for Human Rights” and leaders like Cardinal Mundelein and Monsignor Ryan have roundly denounced anti-Semitism.

Because of its unmistakably Catholic nature the Christian Front has been unable to make much headway with Protestant groups, although there are undoubtedly some Protestant bigots of the Deatherage-Winrod variety on its periphery. There are many lower middle class Protestants today whose sense of frustration inclines them toward fascism and anti-Semitism, but they are not yet willing to march in a parade led by Father Coughlin, the International Catholic Truth Society, and the *Tablet*.

### CHARGES AND REFUTATIONS

On November 20, November 27, and December 4, 1938, Father Coughlin went on the air to charge that it was the Jews who created the Soviet Union, that the American banking house of Kuhn, Loeb and Company had helped to finance the Russian revolution, and that the Communist Party, at home and abroad, was controlled by Jews. To substantiate these charges he gave as his sources (a) a British "White Paper" published in 1919, and (b) a United States Secret Service Report. When the United States Secret Service denied the existence of the report mentioned and the British "White Paper" was found to contain none of the statements attributed to it, he stated that he had been quoting from a book by an Irish priest named Denis Fahey, who in turn had been quoting from a document published by "Documentation Catholique" of Paris in 1920. But the real source, whether by direct quotation or quotation of quotations in the "Documentation Catholique," was revealed when it was discovered that the December 4 address was taken almost word for word from material appearing in the German propaganda news-sheet, *World Service*. (For the complete story of the tracking down of Father Coughlin's "sources" in this case see the Institute for Propaganda Analysis book *The Fine Art of Propaganda*, pages 76-91.)

The chief charges made against the Jews by Father Coughlin and his Christian Front—that an undue proportion of them are Communists, that they control the Russian and American Communist parties, and that they dominate the economic life of this country—are palpably absurd. A survey made by *Fortune* magazine showed that only approximately 3,500 of the 4,500,000 Jews in the United States are members of the Communist Party, and pointed out that the Party's American leaders—Browder, Hathaway, Foster, Ford, Minor, Patterson, Haywood, and Mother Bloor—are all non-Jewish. (*Fortune*, February 6, 1936.) The Institute for Propaganda Analysis, answering Father Coughlin's charge that only three of the fifty-nine members of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party were non-Jews, points out that actually the Central Committee has nearly twice fifty-nine members and that virtually all of them are non-Jews. (June Bulletin of the Institute entitled "Father Coughlin—Priest and Politician.") Stanley High pointed out in the July 18 number of *Look* magazine that in New York City, where Jews make up 30 per cent. of the population, only 7 per cent. of the bankers and 18 per cent. of the Stock Exchange members are Jews, and that of the 80,000 directors of America's leading corporations only 4.8 per cent. are Jewish.

### PRO-NAZI SOURCE

The virus of this new, malevolent American anti-Semitism came to these shores from Nazi Germany. Its chief carriers were Father Coughlin and his penny-dreadful magazine, *Social Justice*, and Fritz Kuhn's German-American Bund. They soon joined forces with each other and with the native anti-Semitic demagogues—William Dudley Pelley, Deatherage, James True, Winrod, George W. Christians—who temporarily buried their

anti-Catholic predilections in order to unite with what seemed to be the most vital of American fascist movements.

Father Coughlin, although he has been lately put on the defensive by events abroad, has several times openly expressed his admiration for totalitarianism and his contempt for what he called in his radio address of July 30, 1939, "the poppycock of democracy." In his radio address of March 26, 1939, he contrasted our democracy with the "dynamic" fascist powers, saying: "Despite all their faults, Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Germany have thrown off the yoke of the international bankers and solved the problem of unemployment."

On another occasion he stated that "all the principles of social justice are now being put into practice in Germany and Italy," and as lately as September 1, 1939, he called Hitler "the welder of a magnificent unity which enabled Germany to come back." But he did not see fit to admit that much of his December 4, 1938, speech came word for word from the German *World Service*, nor did he mention the fact that an article written by him for the December 5, 1938, number of *Social Justice*, entitled "Background of Persecution" was taken almost word for word from a speech which had been delivered by Dr. Paul Joseph Goebbels before the Seventh National Socialist Party Conference at Nuremberg on September 13, 1935. (*St. Louis Star-Times*, December 31, 1938.)

His Christian Front leaders have been even more outspoken in their admiration of Nazism. Joseph McWilliams, the young Texas Irishman who heads the "Christian Mobilizers" once told a meeting of the "Crusaders for Americanism" that "America can never be without a leader as long as there is a copy of *Mein Kampf*." The applause accorded the name of Hitler at Christian Front meetings sometimes even exceeds that which greets mention of Father Coughlin himself.

The admiration of America's new anti-Semites is cordially reciprocated by the fascist press. Otto D. Tolischus, staff correspondent of the *New York Times* in Berlin, reported on November 27, 1938: "The German hero in America for the moment is the Rev. Charles E. Coughlin." On January 16, 1939, the Associated Press reported from Rome: "The Rev. Charles E. Coughlin of Royal Oak, Michigan, received fascist praise and thanks today from the *Regime Fascista*, the newspaper that has led the attacks on the Vatican in the dispute over the Italian and anti-Semitic measures."

### REAL PURPOSE

Historically speaking, anti-Semitism is almost never an end in itself, but merely the means to an end. It was used in pre-war Russia to take the minds of the peasantry off their own unhappy state and to bolster the despotic rule of the Czar. Hitler used it to help him to power, blaming the loss of the war on Jewish sabotage. Similarly it would seem that in the United States it is being used to break down faith in democracy and establish in its place the kind of fascist "corporativism" which exists today in Portugal, Spain, and Italy.

This is clearly seen when we analyze the speeches and writings of the Christian Front-ers and the super-patriotic anti-Semites who preceded them on the American scene. Many of the latter were active in the 1936 Presidential campaign, whispering libels about the President and calling the New Deal a "Jew Deal." McWilliams said recently at a meeting of the Christian Mobilizers: "In 1940, by God, we are going to have a *Christian* running for President, or General Moseley and Father Coughlin will have something to say about it!" (July 6, 1939.) Christian Front literature and Christian Front speakers continually refer to President Roosevelt as "President Rosenfeld" and most of the rag-tag and bobtail followers of Father Coughlin actually believe that the President and many of his cabinet are Jewish and are in office as a result of a successful Jewish plot.

#### PROBABLE RESULT

One probable result of this new anti-Semitism is a new wave of anti-Catholicism. This is likely because the Christian Front with its Catholic leadership and overwhelmingly Catholic constituency, will look to many Protestants alarmingly like the fictitious Catholic "army," with its guns stored in church basements, of the old American Protestant Association and Ku Klux Klan days.

Even if this should not eventuate and if Father Coughlin and the Christian Front should play some part in the building of a real fascist movement, they will still have to contend with the fact that American nationalism is historically anti-Catholic. When "Der Tag" finally arrives Father Coughlin may find himself, his Christian Front, and his Church the very first victims of a Southern and mid-Western dislike of Catholicism.

Many responsible Catholic leaders, of course, realize this. The Catholic Committee for Human Rights is busy setting up local committees in as many cities as possible to combat anti-Semitism, and is publishing an excellent anti-Coughlin newspaper, *The Voice*. And it was the liberal Catholic magazine, *The Commonweal* which recently evaluated anti-Semitism as "one side of a coin on whose reverse is inscribed 'no Popery'."

REV. ALSON J. SMITH,  
New York City.

## News from the Field

During September Charles C. Webber addressed groups of Federation members at the Ohio, Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, Upper Iowa, Northwest Iowa and Northern Minnesota Conferences.

In dealing with the Second World War he urged Federation members to do the following:

1. Pray to God to keep us from developing a spirit of hatred toward any people and to help us work for a just peace.

2. Bring pressure to bear upon our governmental officials to keep our navy and army out of Europe.

3. Boycott the goods of aggressor nations.

4. Request Congress to embargo the shipment of arms and the secondary instruments of war to the aggressor nations.

5. Support the amendment of the Neutrality Act so that the victims of the aggressor nations can purchase arms, airplanes and the secondary instruments of war on the cash-and-carry basis.

6. Urge Congress to adopt legislation nationalizing the munitions industry and eliminating profiteering in the sale of the products of American industry and agriculture.

7. Work for the abolition of unemployment through the adoption of a national program of "social-economic planning under democratic control, with social ownership of all things necessary to its successful operation."

**Academic Freedom Upheld.** Professor W. E. Payne of Indianola, Iowa, one of our Federation members, was dismissed last June by Simpson College (a Methodist institution). The official Commission on Social Causes of the Iowa Conference, at a meeting held during the September session of the Conference, adopted this statement: "We look with concern upon the investigation being made at Simpson College by the American Association of University Professors concerning the dismissal of Dr. W. E. Payne of the Department of Economics and Business Administration, and we reaffirm our desire for academic freedom."

**Amend Discipline re Chaplaincy.** Federation members are advocating in the Annual Conference sessions the adoption of a memorial to the General Conference of 1940 requesting the amendment of Paragraph 400 of the Discipline to make possible the placing of Methodist Chaplains under "the exclusive supervision . . . control, support, and authority of the Methodist Church."

Our members are also requesting the General Conference to "petition the government of the United States to grant to the Methodist Church the right to appoint ministers of its own denomination to minister to men in the armed services of the United States, with the understanding that such appointees shall serve not as officers in the employ of the government but as representatives of the Church in its employ." A suggested memorial and petition will be furnished by the Federation office upon request.

**Wisconsin Conference, September, 1939.** "It is a growing conviction among ministers and laymen alike, that the Christian Church has a mission not only to preach peace but to work for the practical means to secure peace."

**Illinois Conference, September, 1939.** "We have no sympathy with the ruthless aggression which has recently been characteristic of the policies of certain nations. . . . In these chaotic days the duty of the Christian church is plain . . . we must make good our declaration that 'The agencies of our church shall not be used in preparation for war; they shall be used in preparation for peace'."

## PAMPHLET RECOMMENDATIONS

- Benson Y. Landis: *Jews and Christians* (National Conference of Jews and Christians, 300—4th Ave., New York. 5c.)
- Boorsten-Mayberry-Rackliffe: *Anti-Semitism—A Threat to Democracy* (American League for Peace and Democracy, 79 Fifth Ave., New York. 5c.)
- Carl Alpert: *Telling the Truth About the Jews* (Jewish Advocate Publishing Corporation, 251 Causeway St., Boston, Mass. 5c.)
- Frank J. Hogan: *An American Catholic Speaks on Intolerance* (General Jewish Council, 485 Fifth Ave., New York. 5c.)
- Joseph N. Moody: *Why are Jews Persecuted?* (The Queen's Work, 3742 West Pine Blvd., St. Louis, Mo. 10c.)
- American Committee for Democracy and Intellectual Freedom: *Can You Name Them?* (American Committee for Democracy and Intellectual Freedom, 519 W. 121st St., New York. 10c.)
- Algernon Black: *Anti-Semitism—Is There an Answer?* (Ethical Culture Society, 63rd St., New York. 10c.)
- Leo Kaul: *Why is the Jew Persecuted Today?* (Library of Liberal Endeavor, 112 S. Market St., Chicago, Ill. 10c.)
- Benson Y. Landis: *Current Manifestations of Organized Anti-Semitism* (Federal Council of Churches, 297 Fourth Ave., New York. 10c.)
- Dr. Maurice Sheehy: *The Popes Condemn Anti-Semitism* (Council Against Intolerance, Lincoln Bldg., New York. 10c.)
- National Council of Jewish Women: *Anti-Semitism—A Study Outline* (National Council of Jewish Women, 1819 Broadway, New York. 15c.)
- Equality (Editorial Council of Equality, 220 Fifth Ave., New York. 15c.)
- The Churchman (Churchman Associates, 425 Fourth Ave., New York. June issue. 20c.)
- Institute for Propaganda Analysis: *Father Coughlin—Priest and Politician*, 25c, and *The Attack on Democracy*, 25c. (Institute for Propaganda Analysis, 130 Morningside Drive, New York.)
- The Atlantic Monthly: *We Americans* (The Atlantic Monthly, 8 Arlington St., Boston, Mass. 25c.)
- "We Hold These Truths" (League of American Writers, 381 Fourth Ave., New York. 25c.)
- W. W. Simpson: *Youth and Anti-Semitism* (Methodist Book Concern, 150 Fifth Ave., New York. 35c.)
- Louis Golding: *The Jewish Problem* (Penguin Books Ltd., England. Available here through Block Publishing Co., 31 West 31st St., New York. 35c.)

**Upper Iowa Conference Peace Committee, September, 1939.** "We recommend that the United States Government, the Church, and other groups within our country begin to plan for an international organization based on realistic good-will and cooperation, and begin to seek ways to eliminate the basic causes of war.

"We recommend that the World Peace Committee investigate the ways in which church members, especially young people may take an actual part in removing the evils of society and in building a new civilization."

**Ministers Picket.** When the ministers of Bellingham, Wash.,

heard that scrap iron for Japan was going to be loaded on a ship in the harbor of their city, they voted to picket the ship. The next morning one of the longshoremen asked the ministers, "Is this a picket line?" They assured him that it was, whereupon the longshoreman refused to go through the line to load the scrap iron.

**Religious Liberty in the U. S. Today—A Survey of the Restraints on Religious Freedom**, published by the American Civil Liberties Union, 31 Union Square West, New York (price 10c) has a significant section on Compulsory Military Service and Military Training in Schools.

Charles C. Webber addressed the Illinois State Federation of Labor Convention at Springfield, Ill. (with over one thousand delegates present) on the "Social Creed of a United Methodism."

**A prayer** by J. R. Ford at the Illinois Annual Conference, September, 1939: "Save us, O God, from false notions that by preaching we can save the souls of men, while unemployment breaks their hearts, unbalances their minds, destroys their homes, tempts them beyond measure, visits want and disease upon their children, and turns their hearts to bitterness, hatred and rebellion, or to hopelessness, despair, and death."

**Ludlow Amendment.** The Illinois Conference, September, 1939, adopted the following resolution: "We believe the passage of the Ludlow Amendment requiring a national referendum before declaration of war, except in cases of actual invasion, would be a valuable safeguard protecting the nation against undue influence upon government leaders by pressure groups seeking selfish or partisan ends. We therefore call upon our congressmen to reconsider this bill at once and to submit it to the people for their ratification."

**Conscientious Objectors.** The Wisconsin Conference, September, 1939, adopted the report of its Social Service Commission containing this statement: "We urge our people to read and support the declaration of the Social Creed adopted by the Uniting Conference which offers full

support to any of our members or ministers who are conscientious objectors."

**The Wesleyan of Wisconsin**, Conference Daily Edition, September 8, 1939, in reporting the addresses of Charles C. Webber and Bishop Ralph S. Cushman at the Social Service Commission banquet, quotes Bishop Cushman as commenting on Mr. Webber's address, "I never heard so much said in so short a time," and then adding, "I am glad for the Methodist Federation for Social Service. Are you afraid of truth? No Christian ought to be afraid of truth. Better not try to put a gag on truth."

Alexander MacNicholl, who is supplying at Glendale, Long Island, in the New York East Conference, apparently is unaware of the real nature of Coughlinism. He addressed a meeting of 12,000 "Social Justice-ites" in Boston on September 8 along with Father Coughlin, and was listed as one of the speakers at the Coughlinite "Peace" rally at Manhattan Center, New York City, on Sunday, September 24.

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